

(PUBLISHED BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT.)

..Cupid's Pen..

By E. LIVINGSTON PRESCOTT.

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I. A small, grave personage of five, seated within the lee-side of a porch, on a shabby old coat neatly folded, surveyed the pathless wilderness of Belgrave square, London. All about him the big houses were shuttered and voiceless. It was a chilly autumn night, and he had been there for two mortal hours, in obedience to certain instructions, for he was a soldier's son.

But the fashionable desert grew to look dreary in the gathering wintry darkness, with the trines tossing demon arms against a smoky red sky, and a wind that howled and swept drifts of sodden leaves in wild eddies about his head. His lips quivered, his big gray eyes filled; in spite of some effort to maintain a strict military demeanor of martial blankness, a whimper escaped him. It is true that if a rare passer-by glanced his way he professed to whistle, and his small blue eyes played tremulously with a few nuts placed in his lap by his late guardian; but a vast and unknown terror was really coming close upon him with the November night.

When at last a big policeman, looking ten feet high, with a helmet like the crest of Goliath of Gath, paused at the porch, he thought his last hour had come. He resolved, however, to die like a man and a soldier, though he screwed up his mouth and shut his eyes tight, that he might not see the process. But *Asquith's* large hand on his little shoulder was gentle as an angel's wing. He had left a blue-eyed youngster playing on the rug in the twilight at home. Also, as he stooped his big head to peer into the shadows, his salutation was a happy one.

"Hallo, Colonel!" he said.

The small sentry pricked his ears, and, rising rather shakily on his cold little legs, executed a precise regulation salute.

"Well, that's pretty, anyway! Tell me, sonny, what you're doing here, all alone. Last man on the beat saw you, too."

"Fazer to me!" the sentry returned humbly.

Asquith, casting a furtive, nervous glance at the folded coat, started. "How long ago might that be?"

"Bout five hours, 'ink."

The policeman shook his head and muttered, remembering the last constable's mention of the frenzied figure of a man seen rushing, coatless and white-faced, riverwards. He took the small child fingers tenderly in his own, and said coaxingly:

"Come along with me, kiddy. It's her Majesty's orders, that is. See? Have your tea and a warm, and—" his voice faltered a trifle—"well, and father. Which," he added mentally, "Lord forgive me, is a lie."

But the promise was kept—in a sense. The dismal wreck of "fazer" came duly ashore with other jetsam somewhere down the Thames. Later, the tearful sentry, perseveringly questioned, could only say that his own name was Neville, that the dead man had been a soldier, and that he, too, was to be a soldier when he grew up. He was incapable, for two reasons—inmate reserve and a limited vocabulary—of relating a career distinguished by a streak of mad courage shining amid a hopeless array of vicissitudes, or of telling of one soft spot of more than womanly tenderness to the child, neglected by a drunken slattern of a wife, dead two years before.

The only possible identification of the boy was a tiny silk bag, hung by an old metal chain about his neck, holding a silver locket of common Indian work, yet with a touch of pride about the small, round mouth and long-eyelid, drooping eyelids. "What's amiss with my friends? Aren't they good enough?"

"Perhaps they're too good," cried Nell, with airy feminine evasion and an experimental air to free herself.

"Oh, I know!" he returned sarcastically. "Yes, you can kiss me on my cheek!"

He turned it patronizingly to her—"but you don't stop my mouth. I'm not the matter to be bamboozled so."

"You're afraid I shall rub it off," said Nell, offensively, tracing the outline of an imaginary mustache on her own upper lip. "Poor boy! You may well be. Why, Rose Martin has ever so much more."

Now Miss Rosie Martin had turned up her elegant nose and pointed a pair of somewhat overfull crimson lips in a scorn at the youthful advances of Master Ernie; hence this small piece of retaliation on Nell's part.

"Of course," said he, dispassionately, "all niggers have."

"Don't! She's my acquaintance," said Nell, with an artificial pout.

"I should like to know who your friends are, or will ever be, Miss Nun," he grumbled.

"Mother and you, darling; and I don't want any better," Nell murmured, with her arm around his neck; "if you'd only give up that dreadful idea of being a soldier."

But he laughed and put her down and began to swagger to and fro, whistling like a lark. "Go where glory waits thee."

It was Ernie's carrying out this intention that brought the new thing aforesaid into Neville's life with the coming of the last batch of recruits. The next bed to the pre-mature child, Neville, was assigned to a blue-eyed, flaxen-haired boy, who, though conventionally a man, was a child in nature; a slight, wiry, strong odor of harmless laughter and tears alike close at hand.

Petted at home, every man, dog and horse was a comrade to young Ernie; every authority a patron and friend, for he had never in his life been snubbed. Even Neville could not resist him, and his reserve was a little pierced.

One night, returning by an unfrequented road at his usual sober pace to barracks, he saw one or two human birds of prey hovering over an object that lay in the shadow of a trio of palms. At his approach the too-wing, and there lay little Ernie, senseless, with a strong odor of poisonous native spirits about his pink lips, a nasty cut among his fair curls, no money in his pockets and a signet ring he proudly paraded gone. His slim body was limp and helpless and his eyes fast closed.

Neville, with a grunt, picked him up and carried him two long miles to hospital. He was at some pains to call there next day—he was passing, he said—and to inquire casually if Ernie was likely to die. Reassured, he sauntered away without remark.

Little Ernie, however, sent him several urgent messages and straggling pencil notes of thanks. So at last he went to the hospital, to be received, literally, with open arms, for the boy danced in his bed, with both hands stretched out, and flooded the staid with phrases of exaggerated gratitude. He had learned his peril from the doctor, who had dragged the facts from Neville, and he would not rest till he had wrung from his comrade a vow to come again. Neville came, for he never broke his word.

One day he found the boy beaming tearfully over a letter from home. He thrust it into Neville's unresponsive hand, who said gruffly: "It's not meant for my eyes."

But Ernie insisted. "See how fond they are of me, bless them!"

It was a pretty letter. In a pretty hand, with a subtle tender perfume of home about it; foolish little jokes, small insinuated preachment, fond dashes, and "a hundred kisses, from your loving sister, Nell."

It pricked Neville in some hitherto unrecognized region. Yet it was like something he had always wanted, without knowing it, and he had a stiff, half-lowering look of pain as he returned it.

"What do you think of it?" cried Ernie, eagerly.

"Don't know." "I tell you my sister Nell's the greatest darling!"

Neville cut him short with a black frown. "Needn't tell these fools, need you?" for the neighboring invalids were enquiring.

"But don't you call it a jolly letter?" the boy urged.

Neville supposed it was all right—for some people. Then he suddenly began to read his comrade a cutting lecture on drink and other diversions.

"Hallo! Are you plous?"

"Never mind. You ought to be." He indicated the letter sternly with his thumb, and the boy, being still weak and the ward darkish, began to whimper penitentially.

Ernie had letters by every mail, and one arrived when Neville was there. The recipient chuckled it noisily on the covert till he should have finished an exciting game of draughts with a neighbor. Neville kicked the bed leg pointedly once or twice, then—by accident—upset the board. His treachery succeeded. The letter was opened and a photograph fell out on to the floor. Neville picked it up with a kind of reverence, and handed it, face downwards, to the owner, who, after a careless glance, handed it back, remarking, "Just like Nell."

While he read extracts from the letter, Neville continued to stare dreamily at the photograph. Perhaps he was disconcerted by what that hitherto uncomprehended, unspoken want was; for at last, the sudden Indian twilight having fallen, he said, under his breath, as if in spite of himself: "I never had a home."

"What's that?" said Ernie, who was wrestling with a woefully garbled feminine version of a football match of his former team.

Neville replied gloomily that it was nothing. He easily, however, induced the boy to read all future letters to him; even sometimes borrowed one on some pretext, and brooded long over it.

II. When Ernie came out of hospital, he found himself severely taken in hand. He was made an abstainer from alcohol, conducted to Bible classes, which Neville had never attended on his own account, and, failing in with the idea, wrote flourishing narratives home of his progress and its author. He had no false shame, and delighted to talk of his people; talk to which his comrade listened with a strange craving.

III. "Of course," Ernie said one day, "we're not rich. Mother's a widow, and they've got a little dressmaking shop, you see. But she and Nell keep everything pretty nice, don't you know. My mother was maid to a lady; married from the house, and when she lost father and her mistress was ill, she went back to nurse her. They took an awful fancy to Nell, and paid for her education, and would have adopted her, but we two couldn't bear to part with her. Besides, she's as shy as a bird with strangers, though the dearest little woman at home."

Neville hazarded a moody hint that this paragon had probably many suitors.

"Turns up her nose at all my friends!" the boy declared emphatically. "I brought lots of Johnnies—capital chaps—home, but my lady wouldn't look at one of them."

Neville asked why.

"Oh! Nell's a romantic little puss. They're not up to her mark."

Neville looked still more gloomy and asked no more questions just then.

In due time a letter came from Ernie's mother, to thank and praise him for his kindness to the home darling. He flushed darkly as he read it, for though it was ostensibly from Mrs. Ernie, he knew the handwriting.

Ernie, quite unaware that several effusions had been written that term up, lest they should shock Nell's fastidious taste, worried him to reply. But though Neville would only send a stiff message, he did many foolish things secretly; as studying the boy's profile and tracing in its glorified likeness a visionary Nell. By and by, Neville being promoted, the two saw less of each other—a cause of morbid self-reproach to Neville when, later, a tragic cloud blotted the sunshine.

One day little Ernie went out, gay and loud, slapping his studious mentor on the back as an old slow coach. Neville long remembered the sunny blue eyes and ringing laugh as his flaxen head disappeared through the doorway. When next he saw those eyes, they were fast glazing. The close curls the mother's hand would never touch again were damp with heavy dew of death. The lad had gone, with other lads, on a scramble up the hills, devouring recklessly any wild fruits they came across. He managed faintly to make the doctor understand that he had eaten "something like a cucumber." His comrades had to carry him back, moaning, writhing in burning agony.

An hour or so, and night had fallen on the noonday of his life. He was not—he said between the paroxysms—tremendously—the long word halted on his lips—afraid; he could see a languid smile tracing his white drawn mouth—light. And mother and Nell were praying always at a fragment of a child's hymn. "There is a Happy Land," was on his tongue as he passed away. He looked no more than ten years old as they wrapped what stood for a coffin there about him.

When all was done Neville, who had never loved anything before, drifted about like a lost dog, doubly weighted by the dire thought that it was he who must write home and tell the news—he, who found words so hard always, especially the language of a tenderness he had never known. Searching wildly for consolations, a happy idea struck him at the sight of a start servant with a photographic camera. He would ask him to "take" the mound of Indian earth, which was all that remained to the mother and sister of their boy.

When first he saw the result Neville was vexed, for a brooding figure which he recognized stood by the grave.

"I never meant you to take me, sergeant!"

But the sergeant, a knowledgeable person, replied, "Don't be a fool, man! It's just the thing to comfort a woman to see something there looking sorrowful."

Neville felt there was reason in this; the loneliness of the far-off grave had oppressed his own spirit. He sent the little picture, with a brief note, whose brevity failed to conceal a personal and passionate sense of loss.

When the answer came he rushed away with it to the wilds. Many sheets long and blotted with tears, it opened a new world, temporal and spiritual, to him; and he, who had never shed a tear since his infancy, was completely broken down. No wonder, when he found that Ernie's death had given

him a home and a mother and sister. He put his finger on that last word, with something between a laugh and a sob, as he lay on the Indian hillside and watched the big, bright stars come solemnly out.

"No, 'sister,' not that!" he said, then asked himself harshly, what right had he?

Nevertheless, from that hour he pursued the dream ardently and wrought it into his life. Little tokens of the new life came to him proving that same laughter about his eyes in his heart. Nobody had ever given him a present before. There were cambric handkerchiefs worked with his initials, a pretty prayer book and a piece of silk exquisitely embroidered, which, he was informed, was a mysterious object called a "chair pad."

Now chairs do not obtain in a barrack room, and even if they did, this sacred fabric could not be so degraded. After much painful cogitation, he eventually had it put in an elaborate frame, and curiously informed the room that whoever laid a desecrating finger upon it must reckon with him. His arm, if spare, was powerful, and his sword always his bond. Besides, the men of his company had known the dead, and most soldiers in such matters are oddly loyal. The little story of the friendship was common property—a few, perhaps, guessing something more—and all showed a rude tenderness for the incongruous ornament. Even that awful personage, the colonel, noticed and admired it.

Neville wrote a brief letter of thanks, and by degrees others, longer. Gradually, Nell ceased to sign herself his "affectionate sister." At last there came a day—most of us have known one such in our lives—when the arid world burst into blossom and song; and, of that new world, the lonely Neville was king and Nell queen-elect. His own life-story, told badly according to his stern notion of honor in his first epistle, had been a cause better than the flatness of poor Ernie's "domestic."

The regiment left India, and when he came "home" there was a wonderful meeting indeed. For each, the dream fell far short of the reality.

"Oh, mother, isn't he beautiful!" Nell whispered that night, with her face hidden on her mother's shoulder.

Neville had no one to make a similar remark to, but on the next morning, when he stood by Nell in church and saw her dove eyes bent on her prayer book, and caught the murmur of her soft voice blended with his own, his heart sang a louder Te Deum than the whole choir and organ put together.

That Sunday afternoon, as the three sat cozily round the fire, a strange thing happened. Neville brought out before them—it was a bit of his stubborn honesty—the locket which the big policeman had found on his neck at the station, twenty years before. The orphanage authorities had handed it to him with his numerous certificates of merit when he joined the army.

Nell had it in her hand, and was studying it with tender interest. Neville leaning over her shoulder to say, with a tinge of bitterness, "My whole family inheritance!"

When the mother began to stare and tremble, then snatched it from her daughter, ran to the window and held it full in the red sunset light.

She came back, and, very pale, made Neville, surprised and a trifle defiant, tell his tale over again. Then in her turn she related how her mistress's young brother had run away from home after a boyish escapade and was heard of no more save once, when an unsigned letter came from India, with just such a locket and just such a photograph in it.

"That was him," Mrs. Ernie sobbed, "and this is him." And now I know why, when I first saw you, you didn't look like a stranger to me. And your name—why, that was poor Master Harold's second one, to be sure."

A minute more and her clever fingers, used to delicate manipulation of silks and laces, found, pasted at the back of the picture, a tiny paper. This detached, a name, regiment and date stood fully revealed—"Ernie Neville Arabin, 4th Dragoons, Sept., 18—."

Neville, half-stunned, grew stiff and stern. Nell began to tremble and shrink wistfully. They talked the thing over late into the night, but though Mrs. Ernie was all excitement, Nell had become very quiet and silent, and made excuses to be little in Neville's company.

When Neville returned from seeing the solemn old-fashioned firm of solicitors in Lincoln's Inn Fields who transacted the business of the Arabin family, he was still like a frozen man, and more grave and reticent than before. But every now and then a sudden flood of radiance transfused his eyes, and a dreamy smile fluttered, as it were, faintly across his face.

Nell perceived the coldness, but not the eager passion, part joy, part fear, it veiled. She was, in fact, though she loved him, scarcely as yet acquainted with her lover. She told herself that now, as he realized the truth, his pride was up in arms, and that it struggled with his honor. "For he is honorable," she told herself with a burst of tears, as she sat alone in her little room, weeping for him, across his face in the glass. "So, though he knows that it is I, he will give me, he won't, as our dear boy would have said, 'back out.' But I can be as proud as him, if I am the daughter of his—his aunt's—servant."

At the bitter thought she began to cry softly, lest the sound should reach and grieve her mother.

So, Ernie, on her side, was full of bewildered happiness at her Nell's good fortune. Though she was much more impressed than either Nell or Neville with the advantages of wealth and ancestry, her idea of her own child's charm and sweetness was naturally so great that the crisis of events caused her no alarm. "And then, my dear lady always wanted my Nell for her own," she reflected.

To Neville, still dazed at this sudden turn of the cards, and doubtful of his ability to fill this new and strange position, it never occurred that Nell also might have doubts and tremors, or that she could possibly imagine herself unworthy and despised. But he had to run hither and thither, to have complicated documents explained to him by the lawyer, to procure and assume the outward array of a gentleman, and knew even less than most of his sex of a woman's heart.

Matters came to a climax at last, when the three gathered in the little parlor. The brass plate, in spite of a request from Lady Wroughton, still remained on the door, and Mademoiselle Eleonore pursued her business with gentle obstinacy. She could not, however, always find excuses to evade her lover, especially when her mother, avoiding the timid reproach of her glance, declared openly that every stitch of work in the house was finished.

"And what's more," she said, "Nell shan't set needle in another yard of silk—she'll do her own work, and I'll do mine!"

"Certainly not," said Neville Arabin, with a frown.

Then Mrs. Ernie, leaning back in her chair, pursued thoughtfully—

"And so it's all true. My poor lady, that was all alone, she'll be as happy as a queen. Those stupid lawyers have been long enough seeking a clew, but I'll own they've been quick since they got this start. Ah, well! if she's a brother's wife, she's a nephew, and you a good aunt, Mr. Neville."

"If I found a good mother first," said Neville, steadfastly. It was not, however, Mrs. Ernie's hand which he tried to take, and, stooping, kissed.

But Nell shrank back with downcast eyes. "No, Mr. Neville Arabin," she informed him, "you forget. My mother was your people's servant. You're a gentleman now."

"I should be a gentleman, shouldn't I, if this made any difference?" said he with fire.

"Why, child," Mrs. Ernie faltered, "you'd have been a lady now but for my folly, and—my love!" and she began to cry.

Neville overbore them both, though Nell was very shy when reintroduced as a future niece to the patroness of her childhood, and a trifle proud and coy with her lover, who, on his side, was inclined to be stiff and haughty to his new relative.

"I sometimes wish we had let the whole thing alone," he grumbled. But he became even more ardent wooer than before, and though Nell trembled afresh at every item in her new prospect, love was, nevertheless, in the end lord of all.

HUMOR OF THE DAY.

Time.

"They say she is a great deal older than he."

An Odious Comparison.

Judge. Madge—Isn't Miss Autumn aging rapidly? Marjorie—Yes, indeed. She will soon have as many wrinkles as her French bulldog.

An Easy Part.

Detroit Free Press. Youth—Oh, I don't want to take that character. "I'll make a fool of myself, sure." Maiden—Well, you said you wanted an easy part.

On the Way Home.

Life. Oh—Oh, I'm so tired! He—Poor little woman! You know Professor Buxley took me in to dinner; and he's so intelligent."

The Ravages of Time.

Life. Mrs. Walle—I'm sure the constant anxiety must have been terribly wearing. Mrs. Luers—Wearing? Why, in the last three years I've grown to look at least six months older!

Hardly the Thing to Do.

Chicago Record. "If I was Louise I'd be ashamed."

Not Amused.

Uncle. Jabez—Oh, no! everybody ain't laughing at Reuben for buyin' the green foods. He wishes everybody was. Uncle Hiram—How's that? Uncle Jabez—Well, his wife ain't.

His Come-Down.

Chicago Times-Herald. "I can trace my descent for eight generations," he proudly declared. "Now, I had always supposed you must have descended much more rapidly than that."

Not for His Line of Goods.

Judge. Northern Visitor—But isn't there some danger that you might occasionally lynch the wrong man? He—Well, at least, sah, we have a written list of eligibles and everything is in alphabetical order, sah.

Its Color.

She—Did you tell Mr. Lugs my hair was red? He—I did not. He—How do you do, then? He—I did nothing of the kind. He asked me, and I told him it was the color of a popular novel.

Distance Might Enchant.

"My eyes are no longer like stars to you, I suppose," she exclaimed during a heated conversation with her presumed lord and master. "Well, suppose you go away about a hundred million miles, and I'll take a look at the stars," suggested the cruel, unfeeling man.

Probably a Matter of Form.

Chicago Tribune. "What a large and elegant crowd you had at your wedding, dear!" "Didn't? They were our very best people, too."

"That's the way, who was that tall, fine-looking man with the blond mustache?" "O, he was the detective paid hired to see if anybody carried away any of the costly presents."

OUT OF THE ORDINARY.

Hailstones begin their fall as drops of rain. These get frozen into ice crossing a cold current of air on their way down.

Common laborers in Spain get from 30 to 40 cents a day in the larger towns and from 20 to 30 cents in the rural districts.

During the present century 400 human beings have been lost to the world in fruitless efforts to find the north pole.

There is room for 54,000 persons in St. Paul's Church, Rome, for 37,000 in Milan Cathedral, and for 25,000 in St. Paul's, London.

On the big steamer Oceanic there is no number marked No. 12, nor any card bearing that number. This is a concession to superstition.

In spite of their unsanitary habits the Chinese often escape disease because their houses are well ventilated and the children receive a daily sun bath.

In the United States there are 134 cities which have a population exceeding 20,000. They have a total population of 18,872,462. The average population is 140,830.

Canada's mineral resources, her vast forests, her immense waterways, the great wheat lands of Manitoba and the West are the best to be found anywhere in the world.

In the ancient vase room at the British Museum any one can gaze upon babies feeding bottles of sun-baked clay which were antique when Joseph went into Egypt.

So poor is the spelling in some of the Chicago schools that a return to the spelling methods of the country schools of two decades ago is earnestly advocated in that city.

Rural mail delivery is progressing in a way to satisfy both the people and the department. In Carroll county, Maryland, every farm house now has a daily free mail delivery.

Chicago now contains a greater population than all the cities of the United States contained in 1860, and New York now has a greater population than all the cities together had in 1850.

One of the greatest difficulties encountered by medical missionaries in China is that patients, after receiving gratis a bottle of medicine, are apt to sell it to some one else for a trifle.

"Eucalin" is a newly discovered anesthetic by injection of which pain is deadened to a degree that greatly promotes the work of surgeons. Its successful use in Philadelphia hospitals is reported.

The wheat crop of Pawnee county, Kansas, is said to be greater this year than the entire crop of Indiana. Hundreds of machines are thrashing, but the job is not likely to be finished before the middle of December.

The annual drink bill of Britain is \$30,000,000 more than the total sum in the Post Office Savings Bank. Roughly speaking, one-fourth of the amount of the national debt is spent every year by the people in buying intoxicating liquors.

The number of discontented Turks must be enormous. Forty-eight thousand have been exiled during the last eleven years. To these must be added those who have fled and those who are slated to the exile.

Might as well be out of the world as out of

..Style

Not a bit of use in being out of style when you can come here, where you may see all there is of style, and where you may buy a handsome Winter Wrap, Tailored Suit, Silk or Flannel Waist or Furs for such moderate prices.

New things every day. They don't get twenty-four hours old in New York before we show them here. Nice to know this, ladies, isn't it? Makes you feel comfortable to know that you are wearing the very latest, doesn't it?

Cloaks

Our present showing is a most complete one, as it comprises everything from the little Kersey Jacket up to the most gorgeous Ulster; but it is the intermediate lengths that we are especially strong on—those stylish three-quarter coats in tan, castor and black.

Suits

Our stupendous assortment of Tailor Suits makes it possible for us to please everyone. Then there is a style and character to all that is not found in "general stores." See the marvelous values at \$16.75, \$23.00, \$28.75 and \$35.00.

Velvet Coats

In the most desirable shapes, some are plain and elegant, others are elaborately trimmed in jet, braid, etc.

Flannel Waists

About one-hundred dozen came Saturday. Fresh and nobby styles, some fancy, others plain, made of the best Botany Flannels.

IMPORTANT—All our styles are confined to us and cannot be found elsewhere.

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